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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001994

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/FO, AF/W, AF/RSA, DRL, INR/AA;

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: DEMARCHE ON U.S.-NIGERIA BINATIONAL COMMISSION

REF: A. ABUJA 1945

[1](#)B. STATE 110955 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Political Counselor James P. McAnulty
for reasons in Sections 1.4 (b) and (d).

AMBASSADOR'S DISCUSSION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER ON BNC

[1](#)1. (C) Ambassador discussed the proposed structure, scope, and timing of the Binational Commission (BNC) and its Working Groups (ref b) with Nigerian Foreign Minister Chief Ojo Maduekwe October 29, emphasizing the need to work energetically and soon to ensure BNC success. Maduekwe agreed with the overall scope, timing, and structure, but he adamantly objected to the idea of designating the Secretary to the Government of the Federation as the primary point of contact for the BNC, insisting that he should perform this role and sign the framework in Washington. He promised to work energetically for BNC success, committing to be in Nigeria anytime the BNC met. When Ambassador reminded him of his hectic, overseas travel schedule, including with Nigeria's responsibilities as it assumes the non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council in January, he agreed with the idea of designating another senior official to represent him when necessary. While not definitively settling on a specific alternate, Maduekwe suggested that National Planning Commission Minister Shamsudeen Usman or Presidential Special Advisor on Foreign Affairs Ambassador Thaddeus Dan Hart may be suitable choices.

[1](#)2. (C) COMMENT: Maduekwe has or will institute changes in two key senior staff who complicated planning for the Secretary's August visit to Abuja, specifically his Chief of Protocol and his Permanent Secretary. He just replaced his Protocol Director with a highly-regarded, career officer who served previously as the Director for North and Central America, Toyin Solaja. Similarly, he told the Ambassador that he planned to sack problematic Permanent Secretary Ambassador Joe Keshi, apparently as part of fall out over Keshi's participation in a controversial scheme with then former National Intelligence Agency Director General Ambassador Tony Imohe to deny consular services to self-imposed Nigerian exiles Nasir El-Rafai and Nuhu Ribadu, as reported in ref A. END COMMENT.

WORKING GROUP THEMES AND LEADERS

¶3. (C) Maduekwe agreed on the four to five themes to be addressed by the BNC Working Groups, including Elections Anti-Corruption, Energy and Investment, and Niger Delta and Regional Security Cooperation. We had heard of a possible fifth Working Group on Markets, Trade, and Food Security, to which he also seemed positively disposed. Maduekwe also provided his views on hypothetical leaders or co-leaders for the various groups. While he thought the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) should chair the Anti-Corruption Working Group on the Nigerian side, he strongly opposed assigning the Independent National Electoral Committee (INEC) as the leader for the Elections Working Group. He considered INEC as inappropriate for this task, QGroup. He considered INEC as inappropriate for this task, given its role as an implementing agency, rather than a decision-making body, on elections. He remarked that the Niger Delta and Regional Security Working Group may need representatives from two Ministries, possibly including the Defense and the Niger Delta Ministries, given its multifaceted theme. On the Energy and Investment Working Group, he thought the Petroleum Ministry would be preferable, but he appeared open to considering the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: Embassy agrees with the Foreign Minister's general thinking on the themes and leadership of the Working Groups. We also strongly suggest not having INEC as the GON co-leader of the Election Working Group. The possible fifth Working Group on Markets, Trade, and Food Security, would encompass important objectives on which U.S. agencies are

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already working in Nigeria. On the sensitive area of elections, both sides will need to do more brainstorming on a suitable chair for this working group, perhaps designating a senior person from the legislative branch. Designating a National Assembly member from the Electoral Reform subcommittee, for example, may be a useful way to prod legislators to enact required legislation. END COMMENT.

POLCOUNS' FOLLOW UP AT MFA DIRECTOR'S LEVEL

¶5. (C) PolCouns followed up Ambassador's demarche with Acting Director for North and Central America Rabia Shehu on October 130. (N.B., Shehu moved to this position after his predecessor Toyin Solaja moved to the MFA Protocol Director position. End Note.) Shehu invited three other MFA colleagues to the meeting, given the issues to be addressed by the working group. PolCouns noted to Shehu that Ambassador had already discussed BNC issues with the Foreign Minister, but the Embassy wanted to follow up at the Director's level to ensure comprehensive follow through and understanding on BNC issues. PolCouns left a non-paper on BNC structure, scope, and timing, which Shehu promised to pass along to appropriate officials. Shehu indicated his understanding that the BNC meetings would occur annually and alternate in our respective capitals. He inquired whether the Working Groups would also alternate in capitals for their meetings every six months. PolCouns thought that Working Groups would mostly meet in Abuja, but promised to confirm this point with colleagues in Washington.

SANDERS